



Police yesterday prevent activists of "Amra Muktiyudhar Santan" at Muktangan in Paltan from burning an effigy of IOJ Chairman Fazlul Haque Amin in protest at the demolition of Baul sculptures at the Zia International Airport intersection.

Baul Sculptures

FROM PAGE 1
of the Liberation War.

A police team tried to disperse the protesters and took away two effigies of Amin, which they brought to burn, and a banner of the organisation.

AMS Vice-president Gazi Md Shaiful Islam and another activist were injured in a scuffle with the police. However, they staged a brief demonstration there.

The freedom fighters' sons and daughters demanded arrest and punishment of Amin on charge of sedition. They said he made anti-state and anti-liberation remarks.

President of AMS Humayun Kabir said the sculptures are reflections of the country's Liberation War. So an attack on the sculptures is virtually an attack on the very existence of the country. He said the people of the country are pious but not blind and Islam does not permit any kind of extremism.

Meanwhile, Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, a cultural organisation, also faced police harassment at Doyel Chatter in the city when they were taking harmoniums and tables to the Central Shaheed Minar for a protest cultural programme.

Assistant General Secretary of Udichi Habibul Alam said police asked them to show a permission letter for holding the programme at the Shaheed Minar.

"The policemen said we will not be allowed to hold the cultural programme at the Shaheed Minar as we did not have a permission but we said we are not holding a political programme," said Habib.

The police later allowed them to hold the programme.

The cultural programme at the Shaheed Minar also had a discussion session where speakers demanded reinstatement of the Baul sculptures.

The speakers said the people who killed people during the Liberation

Desco to set up 100MW power plant

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco) will move to set up a 100 MW power plant to reduce load shedding in its command areas.

According to a plan, the Desco will build the power plant in joint venture with a private company under the proposed public-private partnership (PPP) policy.

In view of the cash crunch in the power sector, the power ministry recently finalised a draft PPP policy for power sector to create scope for private-public partnership investment to set up power plants to overcome generation crisis.

The draft policy is under process for the law ministry's vetting. After the vetting, the draft policy will be placed before the cabinet committee for final approval.

Bogra NGO

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around Tk 500 crore deposited by its members early this year.

Following a court verdict against the NGO on October 8, about 10 members of the organisation went to the house of Mahbubur Rahman, Puthia branch manager of FUS, at about 7:00pm on Monday night for getting back Tk 7 lakh they paid to the NGO.

When Mahbubur denied to pay them back saying he would appeal against the court verdict, they beat him up.

Later, Mahbubur along with his henchmen swooped on the NGO members at Nimala bazar at around 9:00pm.

They beat up the NGO members and also damaged five shops. Around 50 people were injured in the clash.

Of the wounded, 16 were admitted to Puthia Health Complex and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

A case was filed against 19 people including Mahbubur. However, none had been arrested.

Local Govt

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Chittagong University Tofail Ahmed have been made members of the commission for a three-year term.

In May this year, the president approved the Local Government Commission Ordinance 2008.

The Local Government Commission will be an independent body, which will function independently in the jurisdiction of the constitution and the ordinance.

All the local government institutions across the country, which were under the direct control of the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperative, will come under the supervision of the commission. It will also have the power of a court under the Code of Civil Procedure to summon anyone before it.

The LGC will have the authority to investigate alleged financial and administrative irregularities in the local government bodies and to ask the government to take actions against the accused officials and others.

War criminals

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From the very beginning of our forum's activities, we have been urging the caretaker government to prepare a list of the war criminals to bring them to book. But unfortunately, we did not get any positive response," he said.

In reply to a question Saifulah said the war criminals will be exposed to people and their punishment will be ensured.

The former army chief urged the political parties not to give chance to the war criminals to join their parties or alliances.

Saifulah said within two or three days, the SCF leaders will visit Chapainawabganj and Pabna districts to create mass awareness against the war criminals.

Later, they will visit Faridpur, Chittagong and Comilla with the same objective, he said.

To a question on BNP's alliance with Jamaat, he said they will hold opinion-exchange meeting with the nationalist party and ask them to quit the war criminals.

US election

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election. "The United States wants to see a free, fair and credible election," he said.

Unlike the US, the European Union (EU) made it clear that they will not send any poll observation mission to Bangladesh if the government does not restore some civil and political rights by relaxing or lifting the emergency beforehand.

The foreign adviser and the US ambassador discussed Bangladesh-US relations which the adviser said will continue to be 'strategic'.

"We also talked about the current state of preparations for the upcoming election on December 18, a process to which the US is according full support," Iftekhar told the reporters.

He expressed happiness over the continuation of generalised system of preferences (GSP) to Bangladesh by the US, and over the fact that last year ready-made garments export to the US markets amounted to more than \$3.27 billion.

The subject of Kosovo also came up in the discussion, and the foreign adviser informed the ambassador that any decision regarding 'recognition' will be taken in light of 'perceived national self-interest and in discussion with other like minded Islamic countries.'

"The hearts of Bangladeshis are always with their Kosovo brethren," Iftekhar reportedly told Moriarty during the discussion.

"The US is a good friend and I know it will always continue to be so, whoever comes to the governments in both our countries. We are also watching the election in the US with great interest, and there will also be changes in Bangladesh, but I expect our partnership and cooperation to remain constant," he noted.

Asked whether the ambassador raised the issue of emergency, the foreign adviser said the Bangladesh government had time and again stated that it is an internal matter for the country, and the people of the country will have to resolve the issue.

DU white panel

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The white panel teachers made the decision after a three-hour-long meeting at the teachers' lounge at the arts building last night.

Seven departments -- Department of English, Bengali, Economics, Mass Communication and Journalism, International Relations, Women and Gender Studies and Linguistics -- under the arts and social science faculties have introduced some conditions that disqualify the madrasa students from admission to those departments.

The meeting, however, condemned the attack on the VC office by madrasa students demanding cancellation of the university authorities.

Talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, the chairman of four out of the seven departments, said they decided to introduce the conditions to maintain academic standards not to exclude madrasa students from the admission process.

However, Prof Amin, also the dean of the arts faculty, said academic standards would not be hampered if the madrasa students got admitted to those departments.

"I don't believe that the academic standards would be hampered. Madrasa students can do well in those departments," Prof Amin added.

8 brands face test

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by the commerce ministry.

The Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) yesterday demanded immediate testing of the remaining brands of milk powder.

Asked consumers to boycott the eight brands, CAB leaders also urged the government to keep sale of the eight brands suspended until credible results are in hand.

Save the Environment Movement (SEM) yesterday urged the government to take punitive actions against companies that imported melamine tainted powder milk.

Addressing a press conference, SEM leaders also demanded cancelling of licences of responsible companies, formulation of a consumer protection act, strengthening of BSTI, and testing of all imported food items before marketing.

The government is trying to brush the matter under the rug by forming a probe committee by the ministry of commerce instead of health," said SEM leader Syed Abul Maksud, adding that the government is trying to protect the interest of businesses instead of the people.

The chemistry department of Dhaka University (DU) found presence of melamine beyond tolerable level, testing samples of all the eight brands of powdered milk provided to them by BSTI.

But tests performed by BSTI and a private laboratory, Plasma Plus, found contamination only in one brand.

After DU reconfirmed its results, the government on Tuesday sent samples of the eight brands to Fao for retesting by foreign labs with international accreditation.

According to BSTI scientists, presence of up to .001mg (milligram) of melamine per gram of milk consumed is considered safe for children, and .0025mg per gram of milk for adults.

On October 16, the government advised consumers to refrain temporarily from consuming the eight brands of powdered milk.

But there are a large number of milk powder brands on the market, especially the baby formulas. Now we're in confusion about which one is safe as the government is saying nothing," said Rifat Sultana of Uttara, an official of a private bank.

Asked why the government is not making any statement about the other brands, Health Adviser AMM Shwakt Ali said, "It's the responsibility of BSTI, and they have already been told to do that."

When his attention was drawn to the public confusion regarding which brands are safe, the adviser said, "BSTI should let people know which brands are not tainted with melamine."

But when The Daily Star contacted BSTI DG Azmal Hossain, he

said they have no plan to do that in a few days.

"We're not doing that because our test results of the eight brands differed from that of the Dhaka University chemistry department," he said.

Asked why they are not disclosing the test results of other brands, he said he doubts whether people will trust the results anymore.

When asked about the number of milk powder brands tested by them, the DG declined to disclose the number.

Of the eight brands the DU chemistry department found tainted, three -- Yashili 1, Yashili 2, and Sweet Baby 2 -- are infant formulas.

"Those three brands were in the pipeline for registration. And there are 46 other brands of registered infant formulas," an official of the Institute of Public Health and Nutrition told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, tests in Taiwan found minor doses of the industrial chemical melamine in milk powders produced in China by the European food giant Nestle, and those products are being withdrawn from the market, AP reported yesterday quoting Taiwan's health minister.

Minister Yeh Ching-chuan said milk powders produced by Nestle in Heliangjiang Province in north-eastern China were found to contain 3 to .85 ppm (parts per million) of melamine. Nestle is a Switzerland based company.

Expressing concerns regarding the implication of melamine contaminated milk products on infant and child nutrition and health, UN agencies Fao, WHO and Unicef yesterday said they are ready to support Bangladesh government for further testing of powdered milk samples by internationally certified laboratories.

In a joint statement yesterday, the agencies suggested immediate actions to ensure supply of safe dairy products.

Ghani

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chairperson called me to attend a meeting after the election. Otherwise I would not have believed Hawa Bhaban existed," he said.

Ghani, however, mentioned Hawa Bhaban's "fantastic" and "appreciable" role in collecting constituency-based data and monitoring party lawmakers' activities.

About the proposed meeting between Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, he said there is no negative side to the meeting and it may rather bring something good.

Ghani has played a vital role for the Khaleda-led BNP in the days following the imposition of the state of emergency.

Replying to a question, he said there is a possibility of post-election violence if people fail to cast their votes in a free and fair manner.

He said he thinks that the Election Commission's initiative to bring qualitative changes in politics will not succeed.

About his presence in the controversial meeting of the BNP Standing Committee at party leader Saifur Rahman's house on October 29 last year, he said he was invited over for tea only. He claimed that he was forced to sign on a blank paper there.

"I went there being invited for tea. We were asked to sign on a blank paper. Although we discussed a few issues, I told them that the meeting had not been convened properly. But we were asked to sign the paper," Ghani said.

A few people beyond the party were present at that meeting, he added.

Taliban militants

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paramilitary trooper.

Khan said an "edict" had been issued to execute the captured trooper. He did not say when the trooper would be executed.

The fighting forced local residents to stay indoors as the Taliban took control of the area. Security forces too were confined to their bunkers.

The troops targeted militant positions with rockets and mortars from their bunkers this morning, residents said.

In two separate incidents yesterday in Khabul sub-district of Swat, security forces killed five Taliban militants in a gunbattle and foiled a bid by a would-be suicide bomber to attack a checkpoint.

The bomber's explosive-laden vehicle blew up when the troops fired at it, officials said.

256 workers shifted

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Police had earlier seized 35 sacks of fake vouchers from BTCL Dhaka offices through which a huge amount of money was drawn by the corrupt staffs.

"The system should be corrected. Every institution, be it government or semi-government, must be made more accountable," says Tac Chairman Justice Habibur Rahman Khan.

On deployment of 122 people for installing a single pan, he ironically said, "It made me think that BTCL was constructing another Taj Mahal in Khulna."

"This is outrageous. It must have been done in connivance with each other. It has to be confirmed whether the auditors were also involved or not. And it must be worked out why the government mechanism failed to check such graft," commented Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Chairman Prof Mozaffer Ahmad.

"How come such a corrupt official is awarded the presidential medal? Honour must be given based on honesty," the Tac chief said. He did not comment whether Tac would recommend stripping the police officer of the medal.

As many as 314 people including 253 government officials, 28 of their wives and 24 low-profile businessmen have so far applied to the commission for voluntary disclosures.

The Tac completed hearing 181 of them who admitted to having ill-gotten wealth worth only about Tk 21.53 crore.

Of the total amount, Tk 10.62 crore was deposited to the state exchequer as of yesterday, while the rest could not be deposited as ACC or NBR is still to release the frozen bank accounts of the graft-accused.

Of the applicants, 126 applied through ACC, 167 through NCC, three through the courts and 18 voluntarily.

Advisers meet

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government already invited them to the talks.

Talking to reporters after his meeting with Khaleda last night, Hossain Zillur expressed hope that today's dialogue would be able to dispel the differences between the government and the political parties on issues including holding of the election under the state of emergency.

He said the BNP chief asked the government through the advisers to lift the emergency as part of a move to create an election-friendly atmosphere.

The advisers suggested that the BNP leadership take effective measures to ensure nominating qualified candidates for the national election.

"We told them to ensure better-qualified representatives in next parliament as it is a demand of the time," Zillur told reporters at the press briefing held at the Banani DOHS Community Center.

Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal, Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Communications Adviser Gulam Quader accompanied Zillur during the meeting with Khaleda that lasted for about two hours.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan assisted the party chairperson at the unscheduled meeting starting at 7:40pm.

The two BNP leaders could not be contacted for information about the meeting.

Hossain Zillur said, "We also talked about post-election affairs including an effective parliament...The BNP leaders said these issues are important but they would be settled through discussion in parliament."

Termining the meeting an informal courtesy call, he said the BNP leaders told them that they are very much interested to take part in the election.

Asked about the government's stance on lifting the emergency, Zillur said the government is not stubborn on the issue. "We are taking decisions considering voters' safety so they can cast votes freely. We hope these issues will be solved through discussions," he said.

Today's talks with the AL will feature issues including withdrawal of all "false" cases against AL chief Sheikh Hasina and her permanent release, withdrawal of the state of emergency and deferment of upazila polls.

Re-demarcation of parliamentary constituencies, role of polling agents and television channels, especially BTV, during the national elections will also come up for discussion at the talks.

Talking to journalists at his Nam flat in the city yesterday, Syed Ashraf expressed hope to reach consensus on all issues relating to holding a free, fair and credible election through discussions with the government.

About the unresolved issues, he said the issues have to be resolved through talks.

He further said, "I think the nation is getting prepared for the election and no one will be able to foil the election."

The first round of dialogue between the government and the AL was held on July 3 but it ended inconclusively with both sides agreed to hold further talks.

The government's first round talks with the BNP on October 14 also ended inconclusively where the party placed a seven-point demand including lifting of the state of emergency.

Alaska funded

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As governor, Palin justified having the state pay for the travel of her daughters Bristol, 17, Willow, 14, and Piper, 7 by noting on travel forms that the girls had been invited to attend or participate in events on the governor's schedule.

But some organizers of these events said they were surprised when the Palin children showed up uninvited, or said they agreed to a request by the governor to allow the children to attend.

Several other organizers said the children merely accompanied their mother and did not participate. The trips enabled Palin, whose main state office is in the capital of Juneau, to spend more time with her children.

"She said any event she can take her kids to is an event she tries to attend," said Jennifer McCarthy, who helped organize the June 2007 Family Day Celebration picnic in Ketchikan that Piper attended with her parents.

State Finance Director Kim Garner told The Associated Press she has not reviewed the Palins' travel expense forms, so she could not say whether the daughters' travel with their mother would meet the definition of official business.

On Aug. 6, three weeks before Republican presidential nominee Sen. John McCain chose Palin his running mate, and after Alaska reporters asked for the records, Palin ordered changes to previously filed expense reports for her daughters' travel.

In the amended reports, Palin added phrases such as "First Family attending" and "First Family invited" to explain the girls' attendance.

"The governor said, 'I want the purpose and the reason for this travel to be clear,'" said Linda Perez, state director of administrative services.

When Palin released her family's tax records as part of her vice-presidential campaign, some tax experts questioned why she did not report the children's state travel reimbursements as income.

The Palins released a review by a Washington attorney who said state law allows the children's travel expenses to be reimbursed and not taxed when they conduct official state business.

Taylor Griffin, a McCain-Palin campaign spokesman, said Palin followed state policy allowing governors to charge for their children's travel. He said the governor's office has invitations requesting the family to attend some events, but he said he did not have them to provide.

In October 2007, Palin brought daughter Bristol along on a trip to New York for a women's leadership conference. Plane tickets from Anchorage to La Guardia Airport for \$1,385.11 were billed to the state, records show, and mother and daughter shared a room for four nights at the \$707.29-per-night Essex House hotel, which overlooks Central Park.

The event's organizers said Palin asked if she could bring her daughter.

Alexis Gelber, who organized Newsweek's Third Annual Women & Leadership Conference, said she does not know how Bristol ended up attending. Gelber said invites usually attend alone, but some ask if they can bring a relative or friend.

Griffin, the campaign spokesman, said he believes someone with the event personally sent an e-mail to Bristol inviting her, but he did not have it to provide. Records show Palin also met with Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Goldman Sachs representatives and visited the New York Stock Exchange.

In January, the governor, Willow and Piper showed up at the Alaska Symphony of Seafood Buffet, an Anchorage gala to announce winners of an earlier seafood competition.

"She was just there," said James Browning, executive director of Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, which runs the event. Griffin said the governor's office received an invitation that was not specifically addressed to anyone.

When Palin amended her children's expense reports, she listed a role for the two girls at the function "to draw two separate raffle tickets."

In the original travel form, Palin listed a number of events that her children attended and said they were there "in official capacity helping." She did not identify any specific roles for the girls.

In July, the governor charged the state \$2,741.26 to take Bristol and Piper to Philadelphia for a meeting of the National Governors Association. The girls had their own room for five nights at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel for \$215.46 a night, expense records show.

Expense forms describe the girls' official purpose as "NGA Governor's Youth Programs and family activities." But those programs were activities designed to keep children busy, a service provided by the NGA to accommodate governors and their families, NGA spokeswoman Jodi Omeared said.

In addition to the commercial flights, the children have traveled dozens of times with Palin on a state plane. For these flights, the total cost of operating the plane, at \$971 an hour, was about \$55,000, according to state flight logs. The cost of operating the state plane does not increase when the children join their mother.

The organizer of an American Heart Association luncheon on Feb. 15 in Fairbanks said Palin asked to bring daughter Piper to the event,

Advisers meet

and the organizer said she was surprised when Palin showed up with daughters Willow and Bristol as well.

The three Palin daughters shared a room separate from their mother at the Princess Lodge in Fairbanks for two nights, at a cost to the state of \$129 per night.

The luncheon took place before Palin's husband, Todd, finished fourth in the 2,000-mile Iron Dog snowmobile race, also in Fairbanks. The family greeted him at the finish line.

When Palin showed up at the luncheon with not just Piper but also Willow and Bristol, organizers had to scramble to make room at the main table, said Janet Bartels, who set up the event.

"When it's the governor, you just make it happen," she said.

The state is already reviewing nearly \$17,000 in per diem payments to Palin for more than 300 nights she slept at her own home, 40 miles from her satellite office in Anchorage.

Tony Knowles, a Democratic former governor of Alaska who lost to Palin in a 2006 bid to reclaim the job, said he never charged the state for his three children's commercial flights or claimed their travel as official state business.

Knowles, who was governor from 1994 to 2002, is the only other recent Alaska governor who had school-age children while in office.

"There was no valid reason for the children to be along on state business," said Knowles, a supporter of Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama. "I cannot recall any instance during my eight years as governor where it would have been appropriate to claim they performed state business."

Knowles said he brought his children to one NGA event while in office but didn't charge the state for their trip.

In February 2007, the three girls flew from Juneau to Anchorage on Alaska Airlines. Palin charged the state for the \$519.30 round-trip ticket for each girl, and noted on the expense form that the daughters accompanied her to "open the start of the Iron Dog race."

The children and their mother then watched as Todd Palin and other racers started the competition, which Todd won that year. Palin later had the relevant expense forms changed to describe the girls' business as "First Family official starter for the start of the Iron Dog race."

The Palins began charging the state for commercial flights after the governor kept a "2006 campaign promise to sell a jet bought by her predecessor.

Palin put the jet up for sale on eBay, a move she later trumpeted in her star-making speech at the Republican National Convention, and it was ultimately sold by the state at a loss.

That left only one high-performance aircraft deemed safe enough for her to use: a 1980 twin-engine King Air assigned to the public safety agency but, according to flight logs, out of service for maintenance and repairs about a third of the time Palin has been governor.

India launches

FROM PAGE 16
"You're seeing India lifting its sights," Pace said.

While much of the technology involved in reaching the moon has not changed since the Soviet Union and the U.S. did it more than four decades ago, analysts say new mapping equipment allows the exploration of new areas, including below the surface.

India plans to use the 3,080-pound lunar probe to create a high-resolution map of the lunar surface and the minerals below. Two of the mapping instruments are a joint project with NASA.

Over the last year, Asian nations have taken the lead in moon exploration. In October 2007, Japan sent up the Kaguya spacecraft. A month later, China's Chang'e-1 entered lunar orbit.

Those missions took high-resolution pictures of the moon, but are not as comprehensive as Chandrayaan-1 will be or NASA's half-a-billion-dollar Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter scheduled to be launched next year, Pace said.

The most comprehensive maps of the moon were made about 40 years ago during the Apollo era, he said.

Beijing in 2003 became the first Asian country to put its own astronauts into space. It followed that last month with its first spacewalk.

More ominously, last year China also blasted an old satellite into oblivion with a land-based anti-satellite missile, the first test ever conducted by any nation, including the United States and Russia.

The Indian mission is not all about rivalry and prestige. Analysts say India stands to reap valuable rewards from the technology it develops and, according to Pace, it already shows increased confidence in difficult engineering and quality control.

The US\$80 million mission will test systems for a future moon landing, with plans to land a rover on the moon in 2011 and eventually a manned space program, though this has not been authorized yet.

And the Indian space agency was already dreaming of more.

"Space is the frontier for mankind in the future. If we want to go beyond the moon, we have to go there first," said Indian space agency spokesman S Satish.